

## Communication

# Tips for Talking to Parents About Vaccines

Health care providers are one of the most trusted sources of information for parents when making decision regarding their child's care. Effective, empathetic communication is critical in responding to parents who are considering not vaccinating their children. These communications strategies will help open the lines of communication with parents by encouraging open and honest dialogue.

## Communication Strategies

### Take time to listen

- Give parents your full attention. Your willingness to listen may play a major role in a parents decision to vaccinate.
- Maintain eye contact with parents.
- Restate their concerns to be sure you understand their point of view.

### Solicit and answer questions

- Let the parent know you welcome their questions.
- Ask open ended questions to let them know you want to hear from them.
- Remind parents that their infant's health is your priority too.

### Keep the lines of communication open

- Be open to questions. A parent may have a long list of questions, but it does not mean they don't respect and trust you.
- Remember parents are trying to make the best decision for their child.

### Use a mix of science and personal experience

- Use language that is easy for the parent to understand.
- Gauge the parent's knowledge regarding vaccines to see which approach (science or personal experience) will be most effective.
- Use a personal story about an unprotected child who became ill.

### Acknowledge benefits and risks of vaccinations

- Always discuss the known side effects associated with vaccines.
- Remind parents of the overwhelming benefit of preventing serious diseases by immunizing.
- Discuss the risk if they choose not to vaccinate or delay vaccines.

### Reduce the stress of immunizations

- Give parents tips on how to make the vaccination visit less stressful e.g. bring toys to sooth the infant, have the mother cuddle or breastfeed.
- Praise toddlers for getting through their shots and reassure them that everything is OK.

### Document and follow up with highly concerned parents

- If a parent expresses a high level of concern, document their questions and concerns so you can have a reference for future visits.
- Contact the parents a few days after the visit to follow-up.

## Trusted Immunization Websites



### American Academy of Pediatrics

- [www.aap.org/immunization/families/deciding.html](http://www.aap.org/immunization/families/deciding.html)

### California Immunization Coalition

- [www.immunizeca.org](http://www.immunizeca.org)

### Vaccine Education Center Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

- [www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/home.html](http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/home.html)

### Immunization Action Coalition

- [www.immunize.org](http://www.immunize.org)

### Every Child by Two

- [www.vaccinateyourbaby.org](http://www.vaccinateyourbaby.org)

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)

## Immunization Skills Institute (ISI)

ISI is a 4-hour course that trains medical assistants on safe, effective, and caring immunization skills.

Topics include:

- Proper vaccine administration techniques
- Immunization documentation
- Effective communication with parents and patients
- Vaccine storage and handling

For more information or to register, visit the Immunization Program website at [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip) or call (213) 351-7800.



# Vaccine Resources for Health Care Providers and Parents

## Resources for Health Care Providers

### Vaccine Safety

- Understanding MMR Vaccine Safety  
[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/hcp/downloads/vacsafe-mmr-color-office.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/hcp/downloads/vacsafe-mmr-color-office.pdf)
- Need Help Responding to Vaccine-Hesitant Parents? Science-based Materials are Available at These Websites  
[www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2070.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2070.pdf)
- Personal Belief Exemptions Put People at Risk: Examine the Evidence  
[www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2069.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2069.pdf)
- Too Many Vaccines: What you should know  
[www.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/too-many-vaccines.pdf](http://www.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/too-many-vaccines.pdf)
- Frequently Asked Questions: Vaccine Safety  
[www2.aap.org/immunization/families/faq/FAQ\\_Safety.pdf](http://www2.aap.org/immunization/families/faq/FAQ_Safety.pdf)

### Vaccine and Autism

- Evidence Shows Vaccines Unrelated to Autism  
[www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4028.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4028.pdf)
- MMR Vaccine Does Not Cause Autism: Examine the Evidence  
<http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4026.pdf>

### Alternative Schedules

- Adhering to the Vaccination Schedule is the Best Way to Protect Children from Disease  
[www.immunize.org/aap/fisher.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/aap/fisher.pdf)
- The Problem with Dr. Bob's Alternative Vaccine Schedule:  
[www.immunize.org/concerns/offit\\_moser2009.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/concerns/offit_moser2009.pdf)



## Resources for Parents

- Clear Answers and Smart Advice About Your Baby's Shots [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2068.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2068.pdf)
- MMR Vaccine Doesn't Cause Autism: Examine the Evidence [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4026.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4026.pdf)
- Questions Parents Ask about Baby Shots [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4025.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4025.pdf)
- Vaccines and Autism: What You Should Know  
[www.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/autism.pdf](http://www.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/autism.pdf)
- Frequently Asked Questions about Multiple Vaccinations and the Immune System  
[www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Vaccines/multiplevaccines.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Vaccines/multiplevaccines.html)
- The Childhood Immunization Schedule: Why is it Like That?  
[www.aap.org/immunization/families/faq/Vaccineschedule.pdf](http://www.aap.org/immunization/families/faq/Vaccineschedule.pdf)
- Vaccine Safety Information for Parents  
[www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/populations/parents.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/populations/parents.html)
- Vaccine Safety FAQ's  
[www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-safety/](http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-safety/)
- If You Choose Not to Vaccinate Your Child, Understand the Risk and Responsibilities  
[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/hcp/downloads/not-vacc-risks-color-office.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/hcp/downloads/not-vacc-risks-color-office.pdf)
- Vaccine Safety: 10 Facts for Parents

